

A decorative graphic is present on the page, featuring a large, thin, light-colored arc that starts near the top right and curves down towards the bottom right. A horizontal line and a vertical line intersect at the end of this arc, with a small yellow square at the intersection point. Another small yellow square is located at the bottom left corner of the page, near the green header area.

# Key Findings from AARP Swing Voter Battleground Poll

August 2008

**TO: Interested Parties**

**FR: David Ginsberg, Vice President, Penn, Schoen and Berland  
Terry Nelson, Partner, Mercury Public Affairs**

**RE: Key Findings from AARP Swing Voter Battleground Poll**

---

### **Survey Background and Overview**

The AARP Battleground Voter Survey provides a groundbreaking, unique view on the key electorate in the 2008 general election: the swing voters in 6 key battleground states. This survey is the first of its kind this election and provides important insights into whom the swing voters are, what issues are front and center for them, and how they view critical policy positions held by Senator McCain or Senator Obama.

This survey was conducted among 2,405 swing voters in the battleground states of New Hampshire, New Mexico, Iowa, Ohio, Florida, and Pennsylvania. Within these states, the survey focused exclusively on people who are either undecided in whom they will vote for in the Presidential election or express relatively weak support for a particular candidate.

At the very highest levels, the survey revealed several important and surprising findings that have significant implications for the election. While the state-by-state results vary somewhat, in general several key trends hold true: Swing voters are older, focused on the economy, financial and health care security issues, and do not feel that either candidate is adequately addressing these issues.

At the same time, the survey shows tremendous opportunity for both Senator McCain and Senator Obama. Swing voters believe tackling these issues will take a bipartisan approach – and believe both Obama and McCain will work in a bi-partisan fashion if elected to office. When given descriptions of both candidates' positions on the key issues of healthcare and financial security, both candidates have policies that greatly appeal to these key voters and are likely to earn their support.

Fundamentally, this survey demonstrates that both candidates can reach the key swing voters this year and win their support – if they reach out to them by making lifetime financial security and healthcare a central element to their campaigns.

## **Who are the Swing Voters? Largely White, Older, Lower-to-Middle Income, Independent, Women**

For this survey, swing voters were defined as likely voters who are undecided in whom they will vote for President or are not strongly committed to any candidate. Across all 6 states, these swing voters are:

- 87% are white
- 71% are over 50, and 36% are over 65
- 63% report an annual family income of \$60,000 or less
- 62% are female
- 45% are self-identified Independents
- 65% are absolutely certain to vote for President in November
- 39% are AARP members
- Lean conservative to moderate in their political ideology (38% conservative, 39% moderate, 15% liberal)

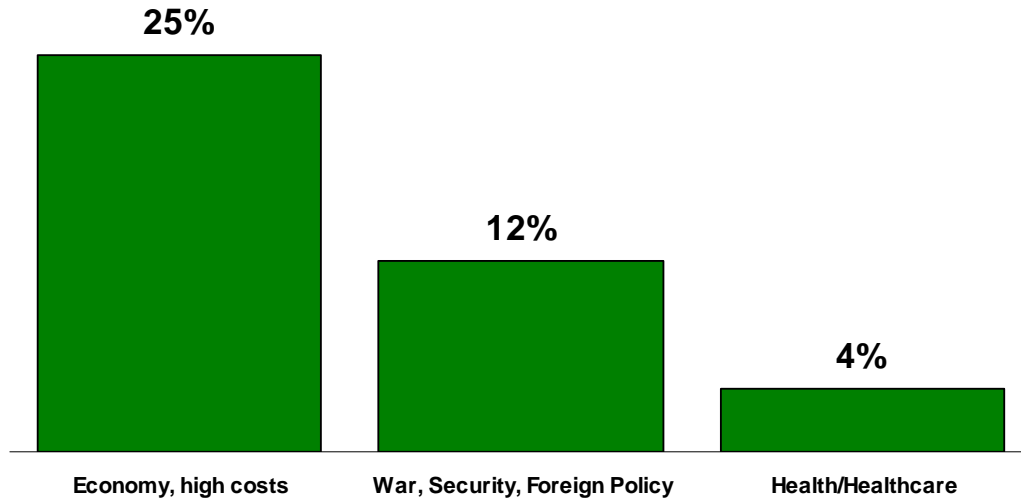
On the individual state level, there are some notable distinctions that are worth pointing out, as this election will be won or lost in individual states and not in national polls:

- New Hampshire: 55% earn less than \$60,000, 93% white, 66% are Independents, 43% are members of AARP
- New Mexico: 68% earn less than \$60,000 and 21% are Hispanic
- Iowa: 75% are over 50, including 45% over 65, 96% white, 50% are Independents, and 66% female
- Ohio: 92% white, 66% female, 39% are Independents, 35% are members of AARP
- Florida: 57% earn less than \$60,000, 6% are African American, 58% female, 38% are Independents
- Pennsylvania: 92% white, 65% female, and only 32% are Independents

## **Swing Voters Worry About Financial Security and Healthcare**

In general, swing voters are very concerned about the economy, their financial security, and health care security. The economy is the number one most important issue for swing voters, and health/healthcare is number three.

**What is the single most important issue in your choice for president? (Open End)**



**Thinking head to the November presidential election, what is the single most important issue in your choice for president?**

	All	NH	NM	IA	OH	FL	PA
The Economy/High Costs	25	24	20	25	28	26	24
War/National Security/Foreign Policy	12	10	12	13	10	14	12
Health Care	4	6	5	3	4	4	6

Beyond that, this survey shows voters have serious concerns about their long-term financial and healthcare security:

- 84% are concerned about their personal financial security for retirement
- 56% are worried about Social Security being there when they retire.
- 85% believe we have an obligation to future generations to “protect Social Security,” and that it is the “cornerstone of the social compact in this country.”
- 94% agree that retiring with financial and health security is essential to the American dream, and this notion of promoting the American Dream makes 76% more likely to support fundamental changes in government programs, employer benefits, and personal behavior.
- 81% say it is our duty as Americans to make sure that retirees have financial and healthcare security.

**Swing Voters Want More Information on these Issues from the Candidates**

While these issues are top-of-mind for swing voters, they do not feel the candidates are talking enough about them. An overwhelming majority of swing voters, 72%, think that the candidates are only doing a fair or poor job of addressing healthcare and financial security issues.

***Do you feel that the candidates for president are doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job of addressing family financial security and health care?***

	All	NH	NM	IA	OH	FL	PA
<b>Excellent + Good</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>
Excellent	2	2	1	2	3	3	2
Good	17	18	17	18	14	16	17
<b>Fair + Poor</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>70</b>
Fair	43	42	46	44	45	37	45
Poor	29	28	29	26	31	36	25

At a time when the economy is struggling, neither Senator Obama nor Senator McCain has adequately addressed these key issues that are likely to have a significant impact on voters' decisions.

***How interested are you in learning more about the 2008 presidential candidates' positions on healthcare reform and lifetime financial security?***

	All	NH	NM	IA	OH	FL	PA
<b>Total Interested (Extremely + Very + Somewhat)</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>63</b>
Extremely Interested	28	23	31	21	28	33	30
Very Interested	32	38	31	31	32	28	33
Somewhat Interested	23	23	21	30	21	22	23
<b>Total Not Interested (Not Very + Not At All)</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>
Not Very Interested	7	6	5	7	7	7	8
Not at all Interested	9	9	11	9	11	9	6

In addition, 60% of swing voters say they are interested in learning more about the candidates' positions on healthcare and financial security. 48% would be extremely or very interested in a candidate forum on financial security and healthcare issues sponsored by the AARP or similar non-profit organization.

**Unlocking Swing Voters with Specific Proposals and Platforms**

There is wide consensus among swing voters on ways to approach health care and financial security. We tested a series of eleven policy proposals, not ascribed to a candidate or party. Of these, the top scoring proposals were:

- 93% favor requiring clear explanations of healthcare costs so patients know how much they will be charged upfront
- 90% favor requiring schools to teach financial literacy to all children

- 90% favor making healthcare affordable for small businesses by allowing them to band together for lower rates, providing tax credits to offset employer premium contributions and protecting them from large rate increases
- 89% establishing preventive care management to help people with multiple chronic illnesses receive better care at lower cost

Both candidates would be well-served to incorporate these common-sense policy positions into their platforms.

### **Both Candidates Have Plans on these Topics that Appeal to Swing Voters**

Although the candidates need better articulate how they will address the issues of lifetime financial and healthcare security, each have compelling proposals that attract widespread support among swing voters – if they make them more central to their respective campaigns.

We tested eight of Senator McCain’s policy proposals on health care and financial security. Of those, the proposals that best demonstrated the candidates’ commitment to providing lifetime financial and health security were:

- 65% believed McCain is committed to these issues when “his healthcare program will increase development of safer, cheaper, generic versions of drugs and will allow re-importation of drugs to help cut Americans’ healthcare costs.
- 62% believe this when they hear McCain “will make public more information on treatment options and require increased transparency from healthcare providers regarding medical outcomes, quality of care, costs, and prices”
- 61% believe McCain is committed when they hear he “will make health insurance more affordable and available by providing individuals with a \$2,500 tax credit and families a \$5,000 tax credit”
- 61% believe McCain is committed to lifetime financial and health security when they hear he “will help Americans save more for their retirement with low taxes on dividends and capital gains”
- 61% believe McCain is committed to lifetime financial and health security when they hear he will “create more choice and competition by putting more decisions and responsibility in patients’ hands

We also tested eight proposals from Senator Obama on the same topics. Senator Barack Obama’s top scoring proposals score as follows:

- 73% believe Obama is committed to lifetime financial and health security when they hear he “will ensure that no one is denied insurance because of their health history”
- 69% believe Obama is committed to lifetime financial and health security when they hear he “will require insurance companies to cover proven preventive care services”
- 66% believe Obama is committed to lifetime financial and health security when they hear he “will allow Americans to buy into a health insurance plan similar to the one that every Congressman and federal employee has”
- 65% believe Obama is committed to lifetime financial and health security when they hear he “will help keep health insurance affordable by cutting the cost of families’ premiums by up to \$2500 per year”
- 64% believe Obama is committed to lifetime financial and health security when they hear he will “eliminate income taxes for seniors making less than \$50,000”

**Swings Demand Bipartisanship to Solve these Issues**

Swing voters demand bipartisanship on these crucial issues of financial security and healthcare, as their appeal transcends political ideologies.

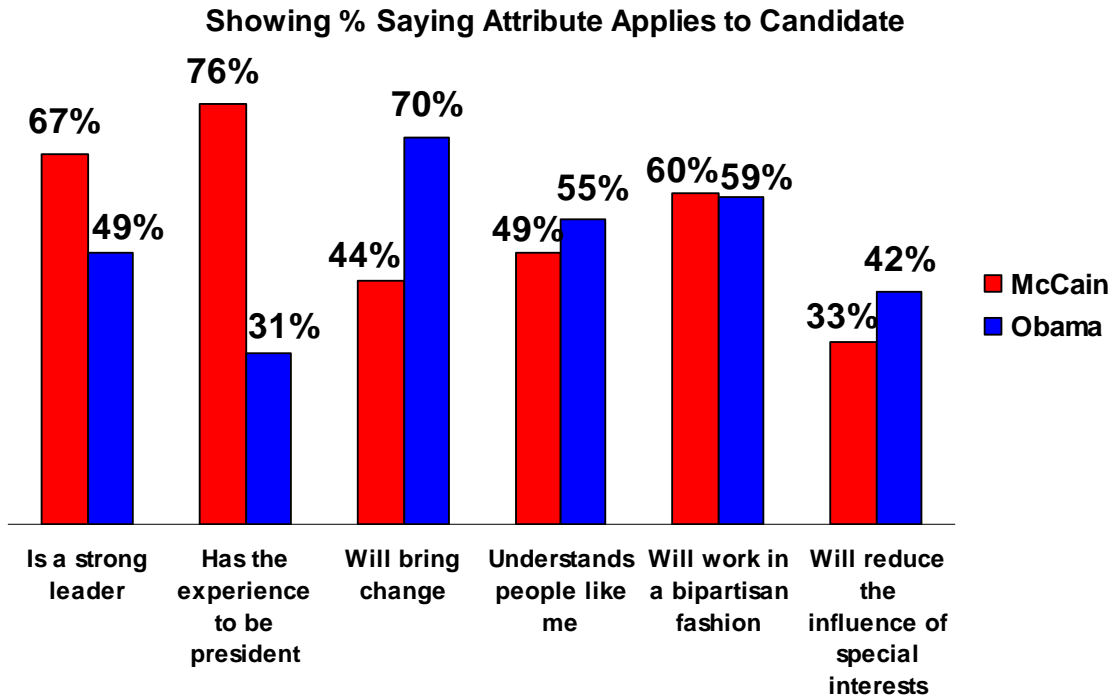
- 93% believe Social Security can be strengthened when both parties work together
- 93% believe our healthcare system can be improved by both parties working together
- 94% agree that healthcare and financial security are too big for any one candidate or party to fix and that in order to improve on these issues it has to be a truly bipartisan effort

**Swing Voters Are Favorable to Obama and McCain**

Overall, among all respondents in this survey, Senator McCain is viewed favorably by 62%, and Senator Obama is viewed favorably by 58%. That said, there are some notable state by state differences, as Senator Obama’s favorability is highest in Iowa, and Senator McCain’s is highest in Florida.

	All	NH	NM	IA	OH	FL	PA
McCain Favorability	62%	63%	62%	59%	60%	64%	64%
Obama Favorability	58%	60%	59%	62%	59%	49%	60%

On key attributes, swing voters have an interesting perspective. Senator McCain leads on *is a strong leader*, *has the experience to be president*, and has a slight lead on *will work in a bipartisan fashion*, while Senator Obama leads on *will bring change*, *understands people like me*, and *will reduce the influence of special interests*.



In the end, both candidates are well-liked by swing voters and have centrist policies on lifetime financial and healthcare security that greatly appeal to these voters.

In this neck-and-neck race, the candidate that does the best job of championing these issues may be able to tip the balance of the election in their favor and determine the eventual winner of 2008 presidential election.